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Executive Registry

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

President's
Foreign Intelligence
Advisory Board

July 24, 1985

Dear Bill:

Enclosed is a copy of the Board's report on
recruitment. Paul Seabury, I believe, has
done a fine job.

Sincerely,



Anne Armstrong
Chairman

The Honorable William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 20505

Enclosure

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ENCLOSURES ARE DETACHED

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PFIAB PROJECT REPORT ON
INTELLIGENCE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Introduction

(C) The President tasked PFIAB in July 1984 to inquire into methods for recruitment and training of intelligence personnel. In his charge to the Board, the President took special note of the importance of counterintelligence and his concern that special talents and abilities are needed by officers to perform that function. Our report on counterintelligence recruitment practices will be completed later this year. The present report primarily addresses CIA's recruitment of case officers.

Observations

(S) This study comes at a time when a significant rebuilding process is underway at the CIA after a substantial decline in personnel in the 1970's. This decline ended in FY 1979 when the number of prospective intelligence professionals recruited increased to [] the previous year's []. This rebuilding process has progressed even more dramatically in the 1980's, [] career trainees acquired in FY 1984.

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(C) Still, there are serious shortfalls in meeting the present and forecasted needs for talented personnel for the Directorate of Operations. The problem is not merely one of numbers. Many different kinds of people, with varied talents and backgrounds, will be needed to meet our nation's diverse and expanding intelligence requirements.

Method

(SNF) In conducting this study, PFIAB obtained CIA's assessment of its personnel needs (numbers, target areas and functional skills, such as languages), for the 1985-90 period. We also examined CIA's current recruitment practices, including spotting, screening and processing, and security vetting. For comparison, we looked at the practices and policies of three other U.S. intelligence agencies (FBI, DIA, NSA) and also those of our closest intelligence ally, the British SIS and MI5. Headquarters and staff briefings were supplemented with site visits in order to understand better the problems faced by CIA recruiting officers in the field. Our review also included extensive interviews with:

(a) Regional CIA recruiters []

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(b) Office of Personnel chiefs and staff (CIA, DIA, FBI, NSA).

(c) Medical and psychological evaluation staff of CIA and non-government experts.

(d) DO, DI, CI Directorate staffs.

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- 2 -

(e) Office of Security chiefs (CIA, NSA).

(f) Office of Training chiefs and staffs (CIA, FBI, NSA).

Current Recruiting System

(C) Fundamentally, the CIA today focuses almost exclusively on recruiting "generalists" for case officer positions, believing that subsequent career training and on-the-job experience will generate an adequate supply of skilled case officers.

(C) The system seeks volunteers, and depends primarily on area recruiters to stimulate interest through placing advertisements in major newspapers and canvassing college campuses. These practices produce thousands of inquiries each year, from which the serious candidates must be culled. Screening begins with interviews by area recruiters and directorate representatives. It continues with administering a testing battery, which is intended to determine an applicant's intellectual and psychological suitability. Further interviews and a medical examination follow, and eventually polygraphing. The complete recruitment process, including the lengthy and detailed security check, takes nearly one year--longer, in some cases. As the above description makes clear, a large part of the effort that goes into the present recruitment process is spent on excluding less promising candidates.

(U) As interviews with current career trainees made clear, the recruitment process does generate a pool of bright and highly motivated people whose morale is boosted by the system's apparently stringent selectivity.

(C) CIA's data on current recruits show that:

- Career Trainees (CTs) come from all parts of the country and have matriculated at a wide variety of colleges and universities, with no discernible concentration of recruits coming from any particular institution or geographic area;

- the proportion of women in the operations directorate is increasing significantly;

- the average age is 26.5 years;

- over 50% of the recruits have some post-academic work experience; and

- about 18% have prior military experience.

In effect, because attrition rates through the training phase average only about 5% (substantially lower than an industry norm of 20%), these will be the characteristics of the next class of CIA officers.

Problem Areas in Current System

(C) We found that CIA has been seriously concerned with improving the present system and with increasing the productivity of recruitment efforts. In our view, however, there are continuing problems that require both changes in current recruitment practices and also a supplemental recruitment program.

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- 3 -

(S) A critical problem is the consistent failure of the present recruitment system to fill validated personnel requirements. [REDACTED]

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(C) It is possible that extensive reliance on the Professional Aptitude Testing Battery (PATB) in the selection process is artificially restricting the pool of potential CT candidates. Currently, the CIA uses the PATB to reduce its pool of applicants by approximately 75%. Tests of this sort are a customary and accepted way in government and industry to cull out people who are clearly unsuitable. Our interviews, however, left us with the impression that the PATB is also being used as a guide to select candidates for recruitment. How the PATB is used might be quite important, because a mechanism designed to filter out "poor bets" might not be particularly good at identifying "good bets." In the present case, it might be inappropriately restricting the pool of potentially suitable trainees. We note, for example, that (while differences in mission objectives need to be considered) the FBI does not employ a test as extensive as the PATB. Yet in 1983 the Bureau received 15,000 applications, appointed 666 Special Agents and met their recruitment objectives.

(C) It is also possible that the duration of the screening process (often 12 or more months) is costing the CIA some recruits. CIA has no data that directly address this matter. But we know that over 25% of those who apply for appointment drop out somewhere along the line, and we also know that a high proportion of CIA applicants either are transitioning from one job to another or are making decisions about their future careers; for them, a year may be, relatively speaking, too long to wait. To the extent that this protracted "application time" is a factor, the problem will grow worse in the years ahead, as the number of persons found in the age group from which CIA traditionally recruits will be shrinking. In this respect, at least, the current recruitment system seems ill-prepared to compete with other government agencies and the private sector for tomorrow's best and brightest.

(C) In addition to the above, PFIAB is particularly concerned that the recruitment process is acquiring CTs who are racially, ethnically, and culturally homogeneous. Consistent with this pattern is the significant absence of CTs who are proficient or even competent in a second language. In our view, such homogeneity results directly from the passivity of the current system. The system is simply not designed to aggressively seek out and interest potential recruits with the diverse backgrounds, languages, experiences, and skills needed now and in the future. Career training of generalists should not be abandoned, of course; but it is expensive, time consuming, and often less satisfactory than the burnishing of talents, perspectives and habits which have, for some, become second nature.

Recommendations

(U) We note that the CIA is attempting to improve its recruitment system. To help stimulate and reinforce its efforts, we urge serious consideration of the following problem areas and recommendations:

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- 4 -

o (U) Shorten the time required to process applicants. While thorough screening, particularly for security, is essential, we believe that increasingly scarce, qualified talent is being lost because of the length of the processing period. In addition, potential CTs receive little or no feedback while the process is underway. Together, these factors virtually invite persons who are making career decisions to opt for other opportunities. We recommend:

- Establishment of a firm target of six months for completing the recruitment process.
- Installation of an adequate data management system to ensure more timely and accurate feedback between the headquarters and the field office and between the field office and the recruit.

o (C) Develop a systematic program for recruiters. We consider the quality of the recruiter to be critical to any improvements in the recruitment system. Our review of the regional recruitment offices found recruiters who were generally enthusiastic and knowledgeable. However, we believe that some regions are larger or more densely populated than can be properly cultivated by the present number of assigned officers, even when augmented by annuitants. Further, we also noted that assignment to such positions is often driven by reasons totally unrelated to the specific needs of the recruitment system. In too many cases, potential CTs are being recruited by officers who are either retired, officers on their last tour of duty or officers assigned for "humanitarian" reasons. These are not the optimum categories from which to draw recruiters. It was also noted that recruiters received no specific training. Each received some indoctrination but was generally left on his own to devise or inherit a predecessor's recruitment program. We recommend:

- Increasing the number of full-time recruiters to enable more thorough canvassing of the talent pool in a community.
- Selection of recruiters whose age, career levels and experience are more credible to the audience that is being recruited.
- Creation of career incentives to attract a high calibre of CIA officers to recruiting and to reward those who succeed in its service.
- Establish a training program for recruiters.

o (C) Re-examine the application of the PATB. PATB is a critical element in CIA's recruitment system. As we noted earlier, however, our concern is that it is possibly being relied on too extensively and is used in a manner not consistent with the PATB's designed purpose. While such a battery may be useful and accurate in screening out undesired applicants, its utility as a predictor of future performance among the remaining applicants may be quite limited. There is no necessary correlation between the two functions. On the other hand, we have been told that statistical data have been collected which indicate that the PATB might in fact help predict future performance. In light of the PATB's critical importance, we recommend:

SECRET/NOFORN

- 5 -

- Creation of an independent panel of experts, properly cleared, to evaluate the PATB; such an evaluation should include findings not only on how it might be improved, but should also address the usefulness and limitations of the examination for recruitment purposes.

o (C) Develop supplemental recruitment programs. While PFIAB believes the CIA should retain its present recruitment system, with some modification, we are not convinced that even this modified system can produce in sufficient numbers the broad diversity of talent, perspectives and personalities required by the CIA. Growing and diversified intelligence requirements levied against the Agency appear to dictate that a more active and eclectic approach be taken to recruiting future intelligence professionals. We recommend:

- Establishment of a supplemental recruitment system that would actively and systematically target (a) potential recruits with special talents and diverse backgrounds and (b) sources of potential recruits that have not been tapped by newspaper advertisements and campus activities.

(a) Special Skills - We believe that the Agency will continue to need case officers who possess considerable language skills and a deep knowledge of major foreign cultures. Even the most rigorous training is no substitute for practically acquired or native skills. Just as the CIA actively recruits specialists for the various disciplines within covert action, we are of the opinion that similar active recruitment of case officers would enrich the Agency's talent pool.

(b) Activist Recruitment - We believe that recruiters should appreciably expand their areas of search and seek to recruit from pools of talent that are not now being cultivated or are unlikely to respond to CIA's newspaper advertisements. Examples of possible pools of talent with linguistic, cultural and special skills that readily come to mind are:

- District Attorney's offices and police departments in cities with large ethnic and racial divisions.
- Trade unions.
- Offspring of employees of either the U.S. government or multinational corporations who have grown up in regions of particular interest to the U.S..
- The Armed Services.

Conclusion

(C) We believe the present system, with the modifications we have proposed, is capable of generating the number of CTs required. However, we are less optimistic that the depth and diversity needed by the CIA can be satisfied by a continued dependence on passive recruiting strategies. Our concern is that this qualitative shortcoming will affect our intelligence capabilities in the years ahead. PFIAB is, therefore, convinced that it would be prudent to supplement the current recruitment program with an activist approach to fill its ranks.

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SUSPENSE 1 Aug 85
Date

Remarks

To 6: Please provide comments to DCI/DDCI and appropriate response for DCI signature (especially in light of actions taken subsequent to McKinnon report).

Executive Secretary

25 Jul 85

Date

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